

Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP)

Overview

ICAP is a multi-year process that intentionally guides students and families in the exploration of career, academic and postsecondary opportunities. With the support of adults, students develop the awareness, knowledge, attitudes and skills to create their own meaningful and powerful pathways to be career and college ready.

ICAP helps students imagine a future career and helps them design the way to get there. Students have a chance to look inside – to determine their interests and passions and outside – to explore and experience career opportunities. With greater knowledge, they can imagine and then craft their individual career pathway to success.

ICAP gives students ownership of a process that helps them explore their unique talents and aspirations, participate in career and postsecondary options and create pathways to financial success after high school.

History and Context

Life beyond high school is different than what it used to be. Most jobs in Colorado require training or education beyond high school. There are fewer jobs for high school graduates now than at any other time in Colorado history. Students who graduate and work in Colorado will need in-demand skills that meet business, industry and higher education standards.

Three out of four jobs in Colorado will require education or training beyond high school. When students take the initiative to complete a meaningful ICAP, they find out which pathways fit their learning styles and their unique talents, which careers ignite their imagination and what kind of training and academic experiences will prepare them for in-demand jobs now and for jobs that may not exist when they graduate from high school.

Following passage of Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K) in 2008, schools and districts were required to develop an ICAP process in their schools for students in grades nine-12.

In 2014, the Colorado Department of Education refreshed the ICAP process. ICAP practitioners asked CDE to provide more guidance in implementing ICAP. CDE researched current and promising practices, conducted a survey to gauge the status of ICAP in districts across the state and compiled resources and tools for ICAP implementation. Then, in December 2014, more than 550 teachers, school counselors, career and technical education educators, special education educators and school leaders gathered for an ICAP Summit to set in motion a refreshed process for developing and enhancing a meaningful ICAP process that students own.

A Meaningful ICAP Process

When students complete a meaningful ICAP process, they:

- Are more motivated to attend school and stay engaged
- Become confident learners who can actively set goals
- Have access to quality career guidance activities
- Connect the relevance of education to future aspirations
- Understand and demonstrate self-exploration, career exploration and career planning and management
- Make secondary and postsecondary course plans to pursue career and life goals
- Are connected to their college and career goals
- Select a pathway that strategically aligns with self-defined career, college and life goals
- Are able to articulate their transferable skills and apply knowledge about how their actions today connect with their goals
- Establish better communication and relational connections between school and home



ICAP is:

- An expectation for high school graduation beginning in the 2014-15 school year as ICAP aligns with graduation guidelines
- A key element of postsecondary workforce readiness that many districts and high school reference as a tool within their unified improvement plan (UIP)
- Required for all students and reinforced by programs, including concurrent enrollment, Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment (ASCENT) and career and technical education
- Connected with the Colorado Academic Standards and 21st century skills
- Embedded in multiple educator effectiveness rubrics as a student artifact and educator process
- Appreciated by companies across Colorado who continually reinforce their high expectations of a student's ability to articulate their transferable skills
- Connected with individualized education programs, advanced learning plans, career and technical education plans of study and integrated with students' industry career pathways
- A process that can help the K12 system stay in touch with relevant developments in workforce and higher education
- A foundational tool that gives students ownership of a process that helps them explore their unique talents and aspirations, participate in career and postsecondary options and create pathways to financial success after high school



ICAP Timeline

Students must start the ICAP process in ninth-grade and update their ICAP every year. (Students begin the ICAP process in sixth-grade in many districts.) With the guidance of adults, including their parents, students build their ICAP using resources at school, on the web and in their communities.

The ICAP must include (*but should not be limited to*):

- career and college interest surveys
- written postsecondary and workforce goals, intermediate benchmarks and data reflecting progress toward those goals
- scores on tests
- experiences in service learning and/or work environments
- activities that establish connections between school-based instruction and the world of work
- an intentional sequence of courses that reflect progress toward the postsecondary goal
- academic progress
- college application(s), a resume or alternative work-based applications
- an understanding of the financial impact of life after high school, including an education

Where can I learn more?

- CDE ICAP Webpage: www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/ICAP
- CDE ICAP Implementation Toolkit: www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/ICAP
- To view all CDE fact sheets, visit: www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/factsheetsandfaqs